



LESSONS for LIFE

MAY 24, 2009 7:00 p.m.

BOOK 3

Rev. Jo Bell

Good evening – and it’s time for book three. Maya Angelou says, “*I long as every human being to be at home wherever I find myself,*” and this week a dozen or so of us spent Friday night and all of Saturday together piloting the first course of a three-course series that’s going to shape our series at MCC Toronto: three courses that help people who are new to the church to really answer that wonderful question, who is MCC Toronto, how do I get involved and how are we in relationship with each other? So we had a blast – and we’re exhausted! The first course that we spent Friday and Saturday on is functionally and currently called MVVB which stands for the mission, vision, values and beliefs of our church, the words and the phrases that you see around the sanctuary, in the social hall – all over actually – at MCC Toronto because we want to be reminded of them often. We worked with our nine bedrock beliefs, our ten core values, our motivating vision which is to be a bridge and our key mission. Four separate statements: for all people, becoming more together, experience the power and welcome home. Now our motivating vision at MCC Toronto is to be a bridge and so to really get that many of us took a walk-about across the ASE bridge in the social hall a few times on Friday and Saturday, and each time we held a different question in our spirits or different intention in our hearts and that work, that walking up and down the stairs and across the bridge so many times was quite powerful as was the sharing that we did: sharing our connections, our stories of connection with this great church and with our key mission, especially the one that says, *Welcome home*. All weekend long it was clear that – like in the Maya Angelou quote I just read – being home matters; and this morning Eleanor McCain sang of coming home in the morning service. The message of wanting to be home is so prevalent and tonight I want to offer you a new twist on an old story in book 3. This book was given to me by a friend and it’s called *Sacred Contracts: Awakening Your Divine Potential* by Caroline Myss. I must confess I haven’t finished reading it but the welcome home stuff was so powerful and there’s a great story in here and I just had to share it with you tonight. So, this may be book three ‘A’ and ‘B’, depending on how the sermon series goes.

It is a new twist on the story of the Wizard of Oz which is, for all intents and purposes, a story of a person’s sudden and unforeseen uncontrolled journey away from home and what happens to her along the way that allowed her to find her way back home. Before I push on though, how many of you can remember our Lenten series? On March 29th at the morning services that day Brent was preaching on the courage it takes to leave home and the courage it takes to return home. Remember that? Our very own Katie White – who is working and we miss her voice in Higher Praise – she sang a song I had not heard in ages and I was sitting back there where you are now sitting, Cheryl, and this song so illustrates our longing to find home, a place where we are embraced and actualized and our love and our life is abundant. It’s the last song sung in the 1975 Broadway musical “The Wiz” which is an all black take on the Wizard of Oz. In 1978 a film version was released where Diana Ross, as compared to Judy Garland, played Dorothy and this song is Dorothy’s response to the good witch Glinda when she said, “Dorothy, think of home.” Now I wish Katie could be here to sing it live for you tonight because it was amazing, but our second place, our Diana Ross runner up, Edwardo if you would key that. It’s about a two and a half minute song and it’s an amazing song to listen to and to hear the words of so I invite you to just think of home for a few minutes: (song is played – and here are the words ☺

Think of home

Home



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When I think of home
I think of a place where there's love overflowing
I wish I was home
I wish I was back there with the things I been knowing

Wind that makes the tall trees bend into leaning
Suddenly the snowflakes that fall have a meaning
Sprinklin' the scene, makes it all clean

Maybe there's a chance for me to go back there
Now that I have some direction
It would sure be nice to be back home
Where there's love and affection
And just maybe I can convince time to slow up
Giving me enough time in my life to grow up
Time be my friend, let me start again

Suddenly my world has changed it's face
But I still know where I'm going
I have had my mind spun around in space
And yet I've watched it growing

If you're list'ning God
Please don't make it hard to know
If we should believe in the things that we see
Tell us, should we run away
Should we try and stay
Or would it be better just to let things be?

Living here, in this brand new world
Might be a fantasy
But it taught me to love
So it's real, real to me

And I've learned
That we must look inside our hearts
To find a world full of love
Like yours
Like me

Like home...

And I've learned to look inside our hearts to find a world full of love like yours, like mine, like home. The book *Sacred Contracts* shared some insights regarding Dorothy's journey that completely illustrated the last line of the song for me in a new way, a powerful way, a way that gave me hope about coming home. You see, in *The Wizard of Oz* Dorothy is called to seek out aspects of herself that she did not know she had, including courage and intelligence well beyond that of a young orphan who left Auntie Em back in Kansas. And Dorothy's journey represents the challenges of survival that each of us face along our own



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yellow brick roads and if you remember, and I'm sure most of you do, a cyclone is approaching across the prairies and Dorothy tries to go down into the cellar with her family who are safe and they don't hear her so she and Toto zoom into the house and run and jump up onto her bed and the cyclone takes the house off, starts to spin it, the cyclone being the chaos that is so often the precursor to real transformation and Dorothy whacks her head on the back of her headboard and loses consciousness and when she comes to the house has landed far, far away and she offers so those famous words: "Toto, I have a feeling we're not in Kansas any more." She begins to sense that she's been separated from her family and everything familiar and it starts to become clear to her that she's going to have to access some stuff to get through whatever is ahead, and then she sees one of those munchkins and she asks them how can she find her way back to Kansas and the munchkin says, "The only way back to Kansas is through Oz and Dorothy has to set out on this journey with an unknown destination. If you remember, Dorothy's guardian for the journey is this little dog, aptly named TOTO, which in Latin means EVERYTHING. Toto is to represent intuition, a reminder that everything she needs is always and has already always been with her if she can just stay present. Brent preached on that this morning, how in the present, if we can not be pulled into our fears and not worry about tomorrow - every spiritual path talks about centering and if we can be fully in the present moment - that is when we know that we have everything that we need. Now suddenly two witches arrive on the scene and they're supposed to be shadow and light and in the story and along Dorothy's journey. The wicked witch of the east immediately goes after Toto, trying to take away Dorothy's guardian and Glinda, the witch of the north, holds off the wicked witch and gives Dorothy the red ruby slippers. Come on, remember this with me...

Next, Dorothy meets scarecrow, complaining that he doesn't have a brain, and scarecrow is an extension of Dorothy, her search for wisdom and of course she says, "If you come with me to Oz I'm sure the wizard will give you a brain." Then they meet the tin woodman who complains he doesn't have a heart - representing the love and compassion that Dorothy needs to access inside of her - and of course, next the cowardly lion who represents fear and who lacks courage.

Now on their journey they encounter difficulties and detours - can I get an Amen? Because she has a choice in all of those encounters: can I be the victim or can I call on my companions and my guides for help and Dorothy and her three companions - slices of her whole self - finally make it to Oz and as any spiritual master worth his salt would say, the wizard says, "I will help you go home so long as you pass this test: go to the wicked witch of the east and bring me back her broom." So what happens next is one of those defining moments and I'm sure each of us can remember a number of those in our lives, for to succeed at this task and to be transformed by the experience Dorothy has to access the courage that has been dormant in her spirit - at least it was dormant until she called it forth, when she called forth the lion. You see we don't just become courageous; we have to act with courage to remember indeed that we have courage. They go back to the witch's dark castle and of course Dorothy gets captured, which symbolizes that sometimes our fears can capture us and get us stuck right when we know there's an opportunity for transformation. And the good news for Dorothy and the good news for each of us is that every time she was in need she was able to call on the lion, the tin woodman or the scarecrow to rescue her. Dorothy called on her own courage, will and heart, and then, when the wicked witch shows up one more time and lights poor scarecrow on fire the inner warrior that's within every one of us rises up in Dorothy and she dumps that bucket of water on the witch and the witch is no more. So the gang returns to Oz, pretty proud of themselves, ready to deliver and be successful and deliver that broomstick to the wizard and at the brink of what they consider to be success they're immediately deflated as the wizard changes the game and says that what he previously asked for was no longer enough. Has that ever happened to you? Right on the brink! Once again, Toto, that little dog, flies to



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the rescue; that little bundle of everything rips down the curtain to expose some guy acting as the wizard and at that discovery Dorothy realizes she doesn't need a wizard or some guy playing a wizard or any real guru to do her spiritual work for her.

So often when we rely on somebody else to deliver us the message or to do our work for us it so often turns out bad for all parties involved. And now it's time to leave Oz and although Oz has signified for Dorothy the achievement of spiritual power, of transformation, of growing up, of independence, she knows that all that is meaningless unless she can bring it home. Then Glinda the good witch turns up again telling Dorothy and I would think reminding her that she's had the power to return home all along; she just hasn't known it. The ruby slippers are all she's ever needed. Glinda's words, her message is similar to the Buddha's message which says that all of us are already perfect Buddhas and because we don't realize it we're running around acting like unenlightened children; for if we truly knew we possessed Buddha nature or Christ consciousness or Holy Spirit wisdom or a spark of the very divine God we'd already be home no matter where we found ourselves. Dorothy just had to click her heels three times together and think of home; and so she does and she wakes up in the morning back in Kansas and outwardly she looks the exact same and inwardly everything is different. She embraces the foster family and the parents she was so disenchanted with at the beginning. She has awakened courage and love and compassion and wisdom, gifts she's always had but accessed on her journey.

Now I remember when I was about this big (holding her hand at almost waist level) and the 1939 version would be shown on T.V. every Sunday night I was way too afraid to watch the whole thing together. Remember when the big bats come in? They start coming in the window and I was "I'm out of here." I'd get up and run into the living room or my Mum's sewing room trying to get cool but absolutely not cool at all! I'd stay in there until all the scary parts were over and a book, which again I encourage you to read as much as you can of whatever books you love, has shown me a new way to see this story and tell me that my little Jobie, who's still very often scared inside of me, can see a new way. It tells us that the sometimes scared inner child we live with that Toto is there for us. We already always have had everything we need, everything we need to be home, wherever we find ourselves.

Amen.